

It Was Only a Fic

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It Was Only a Fic

by [Imagineitdear](#)

Summary

It was only a fic, how did it end with a kiss? (It was only a fic, it was only a fic!!!)

In which Clay/Dream accidentally gets invested in a Dreamnotfound fic.

Notes

I saw a clip of Dream talking about how he and George had read a few fanfics . . . and this fic was born. It's set at VidCon 2021, by which I imagine (hope, pray) that George will have seen Clay's face, if only virtually.

Chapter 1

Clay flung his duffel on the hotel bed and collapsed next to it with a groan.

He hated flying. He hated crowds. And he hated hotel beds. What was he doing here again?

A ping informed him of an incoming text, and Clay rolled over to grab his phone. A physical reminder of exactly why he'd taken the trouble to go to this event.

Georgie: Flight just landed, you at the hotel yet?

Clay typed in a quick response confirming that, then rolled back over and shut his eyes. Vidcon being held in Anaheim, CA should have been a good excuse not to show up. Five hours, from Orlando to Los Angeles, and then an Uber in heavy traffic to the actual city . . . well, it was no wonder his eyes drooped and slid shut about a minute into scrolling through his notifications.

He jumped some indeterminate amount of time later at the sound of obnoxious knocking--not at his hotel room's front door, but the side door connecting to the room next door.

George was here. That meant Clay had been sleeping for at least an hour, he realized with growing alarm. He'd booked two rooms--one for himself, because "I need my beauty sleep," and one for George and Nick to share--and told them to consider it a gift when they tried to pay him back. So if there was a knock from that door, George was *here*, and Clay hadn't showered, combed his hair, or put on something better than dumpy travel clothes in all that time he'd had since getting his friend's text.

The loud banging continued, now with a familiar, "Oh Dreaaaaaam," accompanying it.

That at least put a smile on Clay's face as he ran hands hastily through his hair, straightened his shirt and, with a shaky exhale, got up to meet his best friend in person for the first time.

George was . . . well, short. And smiling at his chest for half a second before his eyes finally reached Clay's face, almost a head taller than him. They stared at each other a moment, a weird silence pressing in the space between them. Clay had no idea what expression was on his face, but it felt frozen, stiff and unsure before George finally broke the silence with a, "Shit, you really *are* tall, Dream."

And like that, the weird tension shattered. Clay was able to crack a smile and give George a friendly bro hug with a slap on the back, laughing all the while. “I have to, like, lean down to hug you,” he said as they parted, only chuckling more when George responded with an eye roll. He stepped back, gesturing for George to enter while asking, “How was your flight?”

“Oh, my 12 hour flight? How do you think?” George said, walking in and immediately sitting with a bounce on the side of Clay’s king bed.

What could he say? Clay liked his feet not actually falling off the edge. Hence why he got the hotel room with one bed.

Clay leaned against the desk across from the bed, crossing his arms and smiling as he took George in: neat, dark hair, bags under his eyes, wearing an outfit consisting of a sweatshirt and gym shorts, which definitely made Clay feel better about his own relaxed wear. He looked much the same as the person Clay saw over stream, and yet being physically present in the same space made it feel so different. Had George always been that skinny? Had his skin always been so pale?

George raised an eyebrow, and Clay shook himself out of it. “Okay, to be honest, you look really weird,” he said, smirking as he successfully put the other guy on the defensive.

“Me? Dream, you’re like, a giant,” George spluttered, “and--and your hair is not blonde in real life, you definitely used filters in the pics you sent--”

“George, it’s spring, my hair doesn’t get light unless it’s in the sun a lot.”

“Oh.” George scratched his neck, looking around. “Well, anyway, this is way more weird for me. I’ve only seen, like, two pictures of you total.”

Clay rolled his eyes. “More than the fans can say,” he said, and pushed off from the desk. “Do you want to sleep some before we stream tonight? You *look* like you’ve been on a plane for 12 hours.”

George huffed, opened his mouth, then shut it with a roll of his eyes. “Fine,” he said with a small smile, punching Clay’s shoulder lightly as he passed by and back through their adjoining door.

“Sweet dreams!” Clay called out before George closed the door--just in time to hear his friend’s amused scoff before it clicked shut.

Clay let out a long, silent breath and lay back on the bed.

His palms were sweating, and his heart raced like he’d just been in a job interview or something. Clay wasn’t sure he could nap more himself despite how tired he’d felt a few minutes ago--now his mind seemed to be going 80 miles an hour, reliving and reanalyzing every word he’d just said.

It was just George, of course. Clay let out another breath, and decided to reply to a few tweets until his mind cleared. After an hour of being around him Clay was sure to lose his nerves, and settle back into the easy friendship they’d had for years. Except now, it would be more than just virtual, and that was a good thing.

Clay relaxed, and eventually started cracking up. Someone had tagged him in a tweet about “Dreamnotfound,” with another fanart of the two of them riding the Ender Dragon together. Clay immediately liked the tweet, before realizing after a second look that they’d also included a link to a Wattpad story the fanart depicted. His amusement only grew when, on a whim, Clay clicked on the link and was taken to a story about Dream and George taming the dragon in some strange, alternate world where Minecraft was real.

Mostly, it was just hilarious. Not badly written, all things considered--he and George had come across some that made the writer inside of Clay cringe, and it had nothing to do with the romance--but also really tongue-in-cheek, making tons of references to their streams in the dialogue and plot. Clever, really, Clay had to admit. He wondered if he should comment and tell them so.

When he checked the time next, Clay realized he’d been reading for two hours, and Dream and George hadn’t even kissed yet. How long was this going to take??

Clay gasped when, after reaching the bottom of his current page, there was no “Next” button. Just a note from the author thanking him for reading, asking him to comment, and saying they’d post the next chapter soon.

He typed out, “okay but when will they smoooooooooch!!” and, not thinking too hard about it, posted the anonymous comment.

He probably should have thought harder about it.

--

Nick arrived, likely waking up George, because after a bit of commotion from the other side of the wall both their heads popped in. “Nick, hey!” Clay jumped up, and gave his friend a good pounding on the back. “Wow, it’s so much easier to hug you than George,” he said as they pulled back, trying to hold back a smirk when George immediately huffed.

“Really, Dream?”

“You’re still calling him that?” Nick said in amused disbelief.

George blushed--actually, legitimately blushed, not like all the times Clay just told him he was on stream--and for some reason, Clay was annoyed. Because he hadn’t been the one to cause it, he realized, and wasn’t that a weird thought.

“Fine. *Clay*, whatever,” George said, and added, “We going to do a stream or not?”

For lack of a better place, they all ended up with their laptops in front of them laying on the bed, Clay then Nick then George, and spent the whole time just further developing the survival realm Clay had started for the Dream Team a few months back. The rate the donations came in at these days made them pretty impossible to read all of, but when one caught his eye, Clay said, “Imagineligers says ‘I’m so excited to see you at VidCon this weekend, what are you guys up to till then?’ Well, uh, like I’ve mentioned, we’re going to hang out, maybe go to Disneyland for George’s sake, visit the beach. Nothing set in stone, really.”

“‘How was meeting Dream for the first time in real life?’” George read from his own donations, and answered, “Pretty cool, yeah, I don’t remember much. I passed out right after, my flight had been so long. Kind of want to fall asleep right now, still.”

“Just three guys, laying in a bed, two inches apart ‘cause we’re not . . .” Nick sang, but during the next word George screamed over it. Clay could just imagine how perfect of a meme that would be, and immediately burst out laughing.

“Somebody clip that, *please*,” he said around his wheezing, only laughing harder when George scoffed.

“What? There was an entire hoard of these *idiots* attacking me,” he said. Clay could tell he was smiling around the words, however, even if he hadn’t been able to see his face.

The chat was blowing up at that point, the general question being why they were sharing a bed, one asking who was next to whom, and one token, “My ship has sailed!!!”

It took Clay a while to get a hold of himself, but when he did, he said, “Sorry guys, Sapnap is between me and George, we’re being chaperoned.”

“That’s right, resident third wheel here,” Nick laughed.

George shook his head. “We’re not being *chaperoned*, there’s nothing *to* chaperone--”

“George doesn’t know this is a date, guys,” Clay said in a pouty voice, though he started laughing again as the donations exploded with enthusiastic replies. One said, ‘This reminds me exactly of a fanfic I read about you two, please stop teasing!!’ and Clay responded, “I’m not teasing guys, we’re actually in a bed, together.”

George dramatically rolled onto the floor, taking his laptop with him. “There, now we’re not,” he said.

Without thinking Clay said, “Well, that’s going a lot farther than some fanfics I’ve read,” and Sapnap choked on a laugh.

“Dream, do you seriously read those?” he said.

Clay smirked, shrugging even though the viewers wouldn’t see it. “I mean, they’re kind of hilarious. George and I read a few, back in the day. I actually looked at one today, while George was drooling on his pillow.”

“Ummm, you should stop talking, Dream,” George said.

Clay laughed. “Why? The fic didn’t even have us hugging. We literally have gone further bases than that after just meeting each other.”

“That’s not even a *base* , *stop* .”

“Yeah, I don’t know if hugging counts,” Sapnap put in with a chuckle. “You and I have had sleepovers, so.”

Clay let out a defeated sigh. “Fine, fine. I know you don’t love me, George. Enjoy laying on the floor, I guess.”

If he came up a little later and killed George in their world, getting the other guy to scream and laugh and ‘groan’ and pay attention to him, Clay decided not to think too hard about why.

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They went to a cool Japanese place for dinner, after which Clay proclaimed sushi was “decent but over-hyped,” and went back to the hotel for an early night in. As Clay got in bed and checked his phone, he noticed an email from Wattpad, letting him know his comment had been replied to.

For a second, Clay had no idea what comment it was talking about. Then he remembered the question he’d posted on a whim, surprised to find the author his/herself had answered, ‘Honestly I’m not sure how that’s going to happen. Dream and George are just so rough and tough kind of love, I’m not even sure if they’re going to do more than hug in this fic. Any ideas?’

Clay let out a contemplative sigh, having to agree. Virtually, it was fun to pick on George. The guy seemed to handle it just fine, dishing out his own shade on occasion, and their banter was neither cuddly nor kind, even when Clay tried to push it that way. George was firmly, ostensibly, not affectionate towards Dream.

Towards Clay? Well. So far, Clay hadn’t exactly initiated anything of the sort, so who knows.

How *would* he do it?

‘Maybe the tough love gets one of them hurt,’ he types after a moment of contemplation. ‘Dream or George goes too far, the other takes it personally, and they have to make up. Actually show they care, for once.’

As his thumb hovers over the ‘Reply’ button, Clay has to consider what he’s doing. What the actual hell *is* he doing? He almost deletes the entire comment, exits out of the page. If George knew he was suggesting how they should kiss to a fan writer, even anonymously, it would probably make his friend extremely uncomfortable. He’d rolled off the bed at just the slightest tease earlier that afternoon. This wasn’t something Clay could or should push, more than he already was.

And he wasn’t even sure why he was.

Fuck it. Clay hit ‘Reply,’ turned off his phone, and rolled over onto his cooler pillow.

At least ‘Dream’ could have George, even if Clay couldn’t, was his last thought before sleep.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

I SWEAR I have no insider knowledge about what Dream's videos are prior to him posting....him and George with the 'riding the Ender Dragon' mod surprised me as much as it did you, seriously. That was just plain coincidence \o/

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Dream let his fingers caress the black scales, warm and smooth and vibrating with the purr of the sleeping dragon. "There's a chance she'll fly off one day and not return," he said sadly, looking over at George.

George smiled, eyes ever-obscured by his thick glasses. "You sound like a fretting mother, Dream. I guess that makes me the dad, in this equation."

"If anything you're the mom," Dream sputtered, crossing his arms.

George just shook his head and laughed, "Why am I always the girl?"

There was an awkward beat; in Dream's mind, a slow realization that George was right--he did often tease him for being girly. In George's mind, a sudden panic that he'd just inadvertently outed himself.

"Hey, girls are great--I mean, if you were one, that is . . . but, obviously, you're not--" Dream tried to amend, his green skin growing paler and paler.

George looked just as uncomfortable. "Obviously," he said, putting away his crafting table. "Um. Anyway. I'm going to chop us more wood."

He immediately began leap-running away, and Dream panicked. "We can both be dads to her!" Dream called after him. Then smacked his face as he realized how that sounded. Dream turned back to Georgina, giving her dark snout an affectionate pet as she blinked open sleepy violet eyes that looked between him and George.

"Don't worry," Dream murmured to her, and pulled out another crystal for the dragon to eat. "Parents fight all the time."

A/N: Okay....I think we're nearing the end of this fic, finally! Georgina was rescued, they're rebuilding their base, basically my whole outline has been written out. Buuuuutttt I also want to please you Dreamnotfound shippers. Thanks smooch anon for the encouragement c:

The end of the chapter came too soon.

Clay stretched out on the large hotel bed, both extremely pleased and incredibly unsatisfied. What a strange feeling. He was more than surprised to check his inbox upon waking up and notice the notification of a new chapter from the Wattpad story. Now he found himself refreshing the page over and over, even though the author had literally just posted.

Hey, this is smooch anon, he typed out in the comment box. Glad to help! Do you think you know

how they're going to do the lip tango now?

"Clay?"

Clay jumped, and nearly threw his phone at the intruder.

George looked some cross between amused and terrified, hands shooting up in surrender until Clay lowered his phone and let out a huff. "Geez, thanks for knocking," Clay said.

"Were you texting a girl or something?" George laughed. "You looked way too pleased with yourself."

"Or something," Clay shrugged, pocketing his phone and standing up. "Are you both awake?"

"Nick said to go to breakfast without him. He stayed up all night texting *his* girl, apparently," George said. "So I guess it's just you and me."

He looked down as he said it, and Clay's mind flashed to the story--which theorized, like Clay once had on stream, that George was uncomfortable about situations like these because he was in the closet. At the time, however, Clay hadn't thought much more about it. What did he care if his friend liked men or not?

And now, all at once, it did matter.

"Yay, some Dreamnotfound time!" Clay said out loud, laughing when that made George scoff. "No, seriously," he said, "Nick and I hang out all the time. This'll be nice." They agreed to meet up outside the hotel rooms in ten minutes, enough time for Clay to shower, dress, and get rid of his morning breath.

As he stared at himself in the mirror, T minus 1 minute until George expected him outside, Clay had to acknowledge what was happening. In the past 24 hours, he and George had officially met in person, hugged, played Minecraft, and gone to dinner. Nothing out of the ordinary happened. George was no different in person than he was online. Everything should be the same as it always was, and yet . . .

Clay could blame it on the fanfiction. Maybe he *should* blame it on that, for changing the way he saw their relationship, from "two lifelong bros" to "two idiots ignoring their feelings for each other." Clay had never seen it as a big deal, which gender a person was. But who knew if George liked boys--and even if he did, if he thought about Clay that way?

"This is your chance, Clay," he told his mirror self. "Figure it out."

He had to laugh at himself a little for that.

--

"Unnnngghhh, these pancakes," George moaned--or groaned, depending on who you asked.

Clay would probably tease him about that normally, but he was trying a different tactic: not getting George on the defensive. It was surprisingly difficult.

"This place was a great idea," Clay agreed between bites of his skillet omelet. "Good choice."

George sat across from him at a sunny booth overlooking the street below, the light falling on them giving his pale friend a bit more color. Or dare Clay think, the flush was because of something

else?

“So what’s the plan for today?” George asked quickly.

Clay shrugged. “Today we can chill, if you want--Nick suggested we check out Disneyland tomorrow, when it won’t be as busy.”

“I’m not even sure why we’re going,” George said. “Don’t you, like, hate roller-coasters?”

Clay shouldn’t be surprised he remembered. “The stuff at Disneyland doesn’t even count as roller-coasters,” he scoffed, “not if it’s anything like Disney World. And, if I remember right, *you* don’t like roller-coasters much either.”

“I like them *after* I ride them.”

And, well--Clay was only human. Or male. Whichever excused him for choking on his food, nearly spraying George with flecks of steak and egg. “Oh my God,” he coughed on a laugh, banging a hand on the table as he tried to catch his breath.

George had a confused smile on his face. “Uhh . . . what?”

“You said, ‘after you . . .’” Clay started wheezing then, shaking his head. He could see the mental cogs turning in his friend’s brain as he thought back to what he said.

Then George was actually flushing, though he was trying to hide his embarrassment with a scoff of exasperation. “Really mature, Clay,” he said with a roll of his eyes, though they avoided Clay’s own gaze.

“Sorry,” Clay chuckled. And then remembered that he was trying to not tease George about this kind of stuff, and this had completely ruined his experiment.

Maybe he could try another, though?

“Does that make you actually uncomfortable, when I joke like that?” he asked George.

Apparently Clay couldn’t have said anything more surprising. George opened his mouth, sputtered, closed it, then frowned, all the while not looking Clay in the eyes. He took a large bite of pancake, perhaps hoping Clay would move on from the subject, but Clay just waited patiently with a raised eyebrow.

“It’s just annoying,” George finally muttered with a shrug, pushing around the last of his breakfast with his fork. “But I mean, *you’re* annoying, so.”

Clay probably should have left it there.

“Okay, let me rephrase that question,” he said, “I can tell it makes you uncomfortable. What I’m wondering is why.”

George finally met his eyes, giving Clay an indiscernible look. “What the hell do you mean, ‘why’?”

“Can I get you boys anything else?” the waitress suddenly appeared to say, breaking the tense conversation.

George wrenched his eyes away from Clay’s, giving the waitress a kind smile. “No, this was great,” he said, “I think we’re ready for our checks.”

“Just one check,” Clay jumped in, ignoring the look George shot him. “This one’s on me.”

“Okay, great,” the waitress smiled, giving Clay the black folder to place his card in before George could protest.

Once the woman left George glared at him. “I don’t need you to pay for me--”

“I know you don’t.”

“Then why are you . . . you’re being so . . . ugghhh,” George finally finished, leaning back with his eyes up at the ceiling. This sound probably qualified as a groan, for once.

“Sorry,” Clay said sincerely. “I’m not trying to make you hate me more than usual, I swear.”

Silence, then: “I don’t hate you.”

It was said so quietly Clay wasn’t sure he was meant to hear.

But then the waitress was back with the receipt, escorted them out, and the conversation seemed to be over. George suggested they grab Nick and some swim trunks at the hotel and take an uber to the beach. Then he started talking about his experiences with seaside fun--a lot different in the UK than Florida or California, it seemed.

It was clear he didn’t want to talk more on the subject they’d left in the cafe, so Clay let it be. He felt a little guilty, really--trying to gage George’s feelings when he hadn’t even figured out his own.

Or maybe he had. Maybe Clay just didn’t want to accept his feelings, if they weren’t returned.

--

At the beach, with Nick back as a buffer between them, George finally seemed to relax again. In fact, at one point he flung wet sand at Clay’s head, in retaliation for getting him wet “before he was ready.”

Clay felt at home at the beach himself--the water was a bit colder than he was used to, and the waves were much more powerful. But it was hot, wet, and relaxing. Up until Nick jumped on his head of course, and Clay went under for longer than he thought he would, carried by the riptide.

When he came back up to the surface it was to hearing George yell at Nick over the waves, and that definitely made Clay grin.

When they laid out to dry George put on another round of sunscreen, lathering it across his nose and shoulders. He asked Nick to put some on his back as well--and Clay looked away, finding he was a bit jealous that he wasn’t asked.

Usually once he figured out he liked a girl *this* much, Clay just asked her out. Whether she said yes or no, at least he could move on from the awkward, pining stage.

Was this different because it was a guy? Or because it was one of his best friends?

Or was it because it was George?

“Helloooooo, earth to Dream,” Nick snapped him out of his musings, and Clay caught the tube of sunscreen right before it hit his face. “You’re looking pink yourself.”

Clay shrugged. “It’ll turn brown in a day or two,” and threw it back. He laid down his towel, which

Nick laid his next to--and then Clay noticed George, who'd waited to do so last, lay his next to Nick instead of Clay.

"Okay, George officially hates me," Clay blurted out once they were laying down. "Either that, or I smell."

"Dude, you probably smell," Nick laughed.

George leaned up onto his elbows, glaring at Clay over Nick. "What?" he asked. "You want me to 'lay down next to you,' so you can get all weird and bring it up later in a stream?"

It was said in jest, to some level, but Clay could feel more than just playful argument behind George's words.

"Geez, no," he said, even as he didn't blame George for thinking so. That did sound like something Clay would do. "Is that why you're avoiding me?"

"I'm not 'avoiding' you," George sighed. "Can I just relax and pretend to tan, now?"

"Fine," Clay said, trying to sound flippant. He probably failed.

Then Sapnap giggled. "Oh my god, you two are like an old married c--"

"Shut up!!" George and Clay yelled together.

--

By the end of the day Clay felt worse, not better.

Realizing he might like George had been nerve wracking, maybe even a bit exciting, this morning--now that he knew it was true, it was just disheartening. Complicating their relationship, making things worse, really.

As Clay collapsed into bed after an evening of touristy shops and events, in which he and George talked little to none, he noticed an email notification in reply to his comment.

Honestly, no, the author had replied. But I'm holding out hope inspiration will strike. They'll at least hug, I swear!

Clay bit his lip, thinking of how to answer. After today's antics, he didn't have much inspiration himself. *I love George*, he started out with, trying not to think too hard about that phrase, *but I think he's too much of a chicken to be the one to make a move. Dream is going to need to step up, and acknowledge their unspoken feelings.*

Easy enough, for Dream. But how on earth could Clay do that, when he wasn't sure there were unspoken feelings on George's end to begin with?

"I love George . . . ?" someone over his shoulder read, and this time Clay really did launch his phone. Luckily it was only Nick, standing over his shoulder, who now rubbed a hand against his temple whilst giving Clay a betrayed look. "Hey!"

"Hey yourself!" Clay snapped. "Haven't you or George ever heard of knocking?"

Nick put his hands up in surrender. "Geez, dude, I just was gonna ask . . . uh, actually I don't remember anymore. And I blame your phone, for that."

Clay grabbed said device from the floor, making sure the screen was turned off. “Okay. Well, if you don’t need anything--”

Nick’s face lit up then. “Oh yeah! Yeah, actually, I wanted to talk to you. George is in bed, and he wouldn’t talk to me, so you get to be the bigger person.”

“What are you talking about?”

Nick sighed and perched at the edge of the bed as Clay sat up. “Dude, you two need to talk. Or, I don’t know, hug it out, or something. Whatever happened at breakfast--”

“Nothing happened--”

“Okay, then ‘nothing’ is apparently making my two best friends *actually* not get along with each other,” Nick said point-blank. When Clay didn’t say anything, he sighed. “Okay. Well. That’s my two cents. Good night.”

He got up and opened the hotel rooms’ connecting door, a suspiciously silent sound that explained why Clay kept getting jumped by his friends.

Then Clay remembered how exactly Nick had scared him. “Oh, by the way, could you--”

“*Not* mention to George what you were commenting on a Dreamnotfound fanfic?” Nick said with a very straight face. Then it cracked into a smirk. “Only if you do.”

Clay groaned--*moaned*--into his pillow after Nick shut the door.

Chapter End Notes

Again, thanks for reading, and especially to all of you who encourage me with comments! This fandom is tiny but vibrant with life!!

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

Um, hi...*nervously sits*

There's so many reasons this didn't happen sooner (caught COVID, university starting back up, Dream and George actually meeting up already and ruining my plot), but the only reason it happened AT ALL is because of the crazy amount of support you've given me. So here's a long, unedited, probably nonsensical token of my thanks, aka Chapter 3. Lol.

Clay was not a fan of rollercoasters, but he had to admit George's reactions to all of it was more than entertaining through their morning in Disneyland. Some of the highlights were, "Guys, this is a straight acid trip, who thought of this" about the Winney the Pooh ride, his high-pitched scream when the yeti jumped out at them on Matterhorn, and most recently the green shade his face had turned after Space Mountain.

"Time for lunch!" Clay decided cheerily, and George groaned with a hand to his stomach.

"That is the worst idea right now," he said, "you guys go get stuff, I'll sit here and try not to puke."

Clay and Nick went to the Galactic Grill, and when Clay ordered two meals instead of one, his friend gave him a look. "You *want* him to puke?" he said.

"The second he smells our food he's going to want some," Clay predicted, thinking of how snacky George got on streams.

"Cute," Nick said, and smiled at the glare Clay shot at him. "What! A way to a man's heart is through his stomach, so--"

Clay punched him on the arm.

If there was anything-- *anything* --Clay could do to rewind time and make it so Nick hadn't walked in last night, he would have done it by now. And suddenly he remembered how annoyed George had been when he paid for their breakfast, the day before, and was more than a little nervous to

return to the table they'd left George at with two containers instead of one.

"Geez, Clay, you're that hungry?" George just laughed, however, and less than a few minutes later began snitching his food. When Clay pushed the tray over to him with an exaggerated, put-upon sigh, George laughed in that high-pitched, mischievous tone before promptly eating the entire meal.

What a foody.

"What do we want to do next?" he said around munching on a fry, and Nick shrugged.

"I think there's only one other ride worth going on, the--"

Clay groaned. "Do *not* say the Haunted--"

"The Haunted Mansion," Nick grinned.

George raised an eyebrow at them both, smiling. "What, is it too spooky for you, Clay?"

"Not most of it, no," Clay said, "Just the . . ." *Train at the end* , he was going to say, before he suddenly decided against it. "Um, the effects, some of them look pretty real. But if you think you can handle it . . ."

"More like if *you* can handle it," George laughed, standing. "Alright. Lead the way, Nick."

Nick gave Clay a pointed look as they rose from the table, one Clay could easily interpret-- *I know you're up to something*.

Clay sent him an answering expression: *Then help me with it*.

For once, Nick did actually prove helpful. As they got in line for the ride, he declared, "I'm not sitting with either of you, by the way. And I'm going in the car behind, so my ear drums don't blow out."

“Clay’s the one who’ll be screaming, not me,” George scoffed, though he didn’t disagree. Clay had to hold back a celebratory fist pump.

“We’ll see,” he said, feigning nonchalance.

“We’ll see,” George repeated back, looking far too confident for having never been on said ride.

To be fair, most of it was rather mild. With George buckled in next to him, Clay was too busy ‘accidentally’ bumping shoulders during each fast turn and catching his friend’s reactions to everything when the dark ride flashed with light, laughing at George’s sarcastic commentary about the props and effects. He hardly noticed the ride slowing down until their carts were only crawling on the railway, George starting, “That was the least frightening thing I’ve ever---aHG
AHHHHHHHHHHH !”

Just then, the dark space to their left flared with light, the jarring sound of a horn as a train looked to be barreling straight toward them. Clay, as usual, flinched. But George nearly jumped out of his seat belt, skinny arms flailing before finding Clay’s shoulders, clinging to his shirt as the smaller man hid his head into his chest.

Making Clay’s stomach flip in a way a rollercoaster could never manage.

Maybe, if it was anyone else, he would have laughed. Clay had a big shit-eating grin on his face regardless, after all--but he was too caught up in the feel of George holding onto him to make fun. It lasted all of 5 seconds, probably, before George let go, flinching back like Clay had shocked him. But the short embrace quelled the last of any doubts Clay’d harbored.

He had to tell him.

“Umm, that was the dumbest thing ever,” George said, flushing as they exited the ride. Nick, getting out behind them, was laughing his head off.

“I am so glad I had front seats for that show,” Nick said, then mocked, “ *Agghhh, Clay, save me!* ” grabbing onto Clay’s shirt. Clay pushed him off with an eye roll.

George glared at them both.

--

They split up, George and Nick to grab food for dinner, Clay to do another collaboration video with Illumina. He didn't like working much while on vacation--but he also liked Illumina, and it'd been too long since they revisited their friendly rivalry.

By the time Clay was done, two hours later, he could hear the party had already started in the hotel room next door. Loud music, raucous laughter, the occasional loud thump Clay could only imagine was something falling to the floor or else, George and Nick throwing things at each other. He snuck through their connecting door, deciding to surprise his friends for once.

Clay walked in on a conversation that, even without context, made him pause.

"--and things would get so awkward," George was laughing, before taking a swig of hard lemonade, back to Clay.

Nick faced him on the other bed, though he was looking down at his phone as he said, "Well, things are already awkward, dude."

"Yeah, but Clay doesn't like . . ." Clay must have made a noise, though, because George stopped and whipped his head over his shoulder, wide eyes finally noticing his presence. "Clay doesn't know how to *knock*," George finished, glowering.

"Neither do either of you," Clay shrugged and, sensing the tension in the room, decided to let this go. For now. "Where's dinner?"

Dinner--Chinese takeout, donuts, and an alarming amount of alcoholic beverages--dissipated any remaining tension, and by the time Clay had finished his water, George and Nick were nearly halfway through their second bottle of the stuff.

"--and then Tommy got all like, 'what the fuck did you do to my anvil,'" Nick was laughing at some point.

"That was an awful British accent," Clay said, and George sniggered.

"Oh? You think you can do better?" Nick taunted.

Clay cleared his throat. "Easy. 'Oye, I'm *Georgie*, would you like some tea and crumpets?"

George normally would have smacked him--in his inebriated state, however, the man giggled.

"Hey y'all, take a ride in my truck," George said, swinging his skinny arms in front of him. "Make America great again!"

"The sad thing is, some people at my school actually sound like that," Nick sighed, falling back and laying out on his bed.

George snorted, and then frowned. "Fuck, I've really got to piss," he whispered rather loudly, and looked surprised when Clay laughed, like he was sure no one had heard him.

"Well? Go! Go then," Clay said. When George just stared at him blankly he got up from the hotel chair to shove the guy off his bed.

Unfortunately--or fortunately, depending on how you view it-- George jerked back wildly to avoid his push, and in the process dumped his mostly-full bottle of beer all over the sheets and himself.

"Dream!!" George screamed, falling back into old habits. Except now there were no screens between them to stop him from retaliating, kicking Clay in the hip and throwing off his equilibrium enough for the latter to land in the wet bed as well.

"UGH!" Clay yelled, immediately grappling with the pale arms pushing and jabbing at him. With little problem, of course, Clay gained the upper hand, shoving George far enough away to get back on his feet. "Now I smell like I just rolled around in piss." Over George's maniacal and clearly inebriated laughter, he turned to accuse: "And thanks so much for your help, Nick--"

Nick snored--thoroughly unconscious.

Clay sighed, turning back to George still gasping with laughter. He couldn't decide if he loved or hated his friends in this state.

"My bladder," George groaned, which set off another round of giggles.

"Okay, let's get that taken care of," Clay sighed, grabbing his friend's noodle-like arms and hauling him up. George fell into him, though this time it was without shame, his eyes hazy and face lax as his head slumped against Clay's chest.

Clay swallowed, hard, and then belatedly felt the wet clothing seeping into his own. That was enough incentive to pull back, steadying George with a hand on the shoulder before declaring, "You need a change of clothes. A shower, possibly."

George hummed, looking like he might fall asleep there on his feet.

"Okay, maybe just the clothes," Clay conceded, not wanting his friend to end up drowning in the water. He crossed over to George's gray duffel bag and fished around till he had a t-shirt, pajama pants and a new pair of boxers. "Think you can handle putting these on?"

George blinked, but nodded. While he trudged to the bathroom Clay inspected the state of the beer-stained sheets, cringing to find the mattress cover had soaked through as well. There was no way George could sleep there.

Clay did have a big bed . . .

He grunted, discarding the notion. That would be way too weird.

When George came out, looking slightly brighter in the eyes, Clay had decided. "My room's got a couch," he gestured, heading to the connecting door.

"Huh, why can't I--" and then George sat down on his drenched bed and immediately jumped back up, stumbling dizzily forward. Dream grabbed him by the arm before the other guy careened onto a still-snoring Nick on his own bed, trying to hold in a wheezing laugh.

“Yeah, that’s why, idiot,” he said, leading George through the door with a chuckle.

When the door shut, however, the chuckle died in his throat.

A single lamp was on from earlier, casting his hotel room in soft, moody lighting. The bed in the center of the room loomed larger for some reason, drawing the eye. George, just in front of him, shifted on his feet, and Clay couldn’t tell if it was from inebriation or trepidation.

“Um. Yeah,” Clay said eloquently after a few seconds of loaded silence. “There’s the bed.”

It must have been inebriation, not trepidation, because with a tired groan George immediately flung himself onto the bed, his skinny limbs star-fishing to cover more than should be possible, considering how little he usually seemed. In this position, however, Clay became very aware of a body part he’d been consciously avoiding noticing, blinking dumbly at the curve of George’s backside on display.

It took Clay another moment to get his dignity back. He cleared his throat. “Dude--you’re taking the couch,” he laughed, sounding more confident than he felt. Definitely not confident to wrestle George off the bed like he had mere minutes ago.

George hmmped. “Not very gentleman-like, Dream,” he slurred, probably near half-asleep already.

Clay huffed, “Who says I have to be a ‘gentleman’ to you?” He poked George in the foot, sighing when the other man didn’t so much as stir. “Okay, you asked for it.”

George finally showed signs of life again when the dip in the mattress informed of Clay joining him on the bed. He raised his head--hair mussed, eyes blood-shot, way too cute-looking considering his disgusting beer breath--and glared at Clay.

“What?” Clay shrugged, slipping under the covers. “You don’t like it, you can go to the couch. Where you *belong* .”

His teasing, of course, only made George obstinate, yanking back the covers from Clay--who

didn't let go without a fight. The two ended up in a twist of sheets and blankets, grappling, and Clay nearly gave in just to stop the heat that was probably showing up on his cheeks. *Nearly*. He still had some dignity left, and losing even a blanket pulling fight would be too much to swallow.

"Just--LET--GOOOO!!!" he yelled, twisting sharply to wrench the fabric from George's hands.

Unfortunately, while twisting, Clay's elbow jammed straight into the other man's nose.

A shocked silence, and then George groaned, sitting up and holding his nose as blood started spurting from it. "Shit, I'm sorry--" Clay took the blanket, still in his hands, and immediately offered it, watching with concern as George pressed the oh-so-coveted cloth against his nose.

George started giggling, which made Clay only more concerned. "Tough love *did* get one of us hurt," he said, as if that explained anything.

"Stay put," Clay ordered, returning a minute later with ice from the hallway machine and quickly wrapping one of the hotel towels in it. He sat down just in front of George, heedless of the mess, and pressed the makeshift ice pack against the bridge of his friend's nose.

"I don't fffink you broke it," George said, muffled around the ruined blanket.

Clay's frown didn't lessen.

"S'okay, Clay," George said, brow furrowing. "M'fine."

"I know," he said shortly, mouth still turned down.

George shoved him back, lowering the balled-up blanket to say, "Seriously, m'not dying! We'll just be a bit cold, s'all." He gestured at the blankets and sheets. "Don't be dramatic Look--not even bleeding anymore, see?"

He tried to shove Clay when the man still said nothing, but Clay didn't let him. Instead, he captured his friend's hand mid-reach, and gave it a gentle squeeze before releasing it. But he didn't expect for the slight intake of breath from George, the way his friend looked more hurt than a jab

to the nose had managed.

“What?” Clay pressed. “Tough love or no love, is that how it is?”

Then his brain finally caught up with where he’d heard that recently--from himself:

Maybe the tough love gets one of them hurt. Dream or George goes too far, the other takes it personally, and they have to make up. Actually show they care, for once.

“M’tired,” George grumbled, laying back and putting the ice pack on himself as he stared at the ceiling.

“*George*,” Clay said. He received the silent treatment in return. “George! What the hell--did you steal my phone?”

“No.” George glared at him, obviously confused.

“Then how come--” Clay cut himself off, scoffing. “Whatever. Move, I need to grab the sheets you ruined.”

George proved very unhelpful, Clay practically having to rip the blankets and sheets from under him before throwing them at the foot of the bed. Then he angrily crossed to the other side of the mattress, laying down at the very edge, clicking off the lamp, and settling into the moody, tense silence between them.

It lasted a good five minutes before George broke it. “I’m cold,” he admitted in a small voice.

Just like that, Clay had to stop himself from smiling. “Boo-hoo.”

“Aren’t you cold?”

“I’m fine.”

To his surprise, a cold foot brushed his own, nearly scaring Clay straight out of the bed. “You *are* cold,” George accused, laughing when Clay huffed.

“What--do you want to *snuggle* ?”

Clay immediately regretted the mocking question when an embarrassed silence ensued.

“*No* ,” George finally scoffed, much too late.

Clay rolled over to the middle of the bed, poking at a knob in George’s spine. “C’mere.”

George looked at him over his shoulder, the white of his eyes wide around his pupil. The alcohol that had him sleepy and giggly before had obviously worn off completely at this point.

“What, no--Clay--”

Then Clay had an idea.

He got out of bed one more time, turning on the lamp and fishing through his baggage. He returned with two pairs of socks. “Here,” he grinned, tossing one folded pair to George.

George stared at him in confusion. “What?”

“Guys can snuggle, if they have socks on,” Clay said cheekily.

“You’re actually fucking ridiculous, Clay,” George laughed, but to Clay’s surprise, said nothing else as he rolled socks onto his skinny feet.

Clay reached over and turned off the lamp, the prospect somehow less embarrassing in the dark where George couldn’t read his face. Instead, it was only physical touch, two bodies carefully settling against each other. George’s bony shoulder poking into Clay’s ribcage, Clay’s arm

stretching out until the crook of George's neck settled in the right place. A warm, tight space of air between their chests, not quite touching. It was perfect, in its own strange, awkward kind of way. The only natural progression to something so unexpected.

"Sweet dreams," Clay breathed, only half-joking.

He wasn't sure what he was expecting--maybe a chuckle, or a groan (read: moan), or a sarcastic reply--but it certainly wasn't for the sensation of soft lips pressing against his own.

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

I return again from the grave!! Thanks for your patience, everyone. Your wish is my very belated command.

One note about this chapter: I didn't know nor care to guess whether a face reveal would happen during VidCon in this chapter or he'd wear a mask, and it's REALLY NOT the point of the story, so I just ignored that detail altogether. Also, I've never been to VidCon so if I'm inaccurate about what a creator's schedule looks like.....oh well.

Last, WARNING--there is ANOTHER cliffhanger at the end of this! Read at your own risk/frustration!!!

Clay pulled back in abject shock.

It was over before it started--George in frozen silence just a few inches away, Clay saying, "Uhhhhhhh, was that--?" with a smile before the other man quickly rolled back.

"*Not* anything," George spluttered immediately into the dark, sitting up.

Clay reached over and turned on the lamp, watching George's dark eyes squint and blink against the sudden light.

"George, uh, you just *kissed* --"

"Nothing," George said quickly. "I just kissed nothing, it was an *accident*, I thought you were farther away--"

Clay scoffed, getting genuinely annoyed. He sat up, crossing his arms as he said, "So what, so you were trying to smooch the *air* or something?" George giggled at that, despite himself, which at first made Clay smile in triumph before he then remembered he was talking to a drunk person still.

"Right. Okay, yeah," he said dryly.

George nodded, way too many times for it to be believable, before looking awkwardly between

them. Continuing the cuddle session was a no-go, it seemed.

After a few seconds, Clay sighed. “Look. I’m going to go steal some of Nick’s sheets, okay? Then we can be warm, and your lips won’t ‘accidentally’ hit mine.”

Then he got up, ignoring George’s adorably rumpled hair and horribly frightened eyes, and went back into the other hotel room to steal from Nick. He had to stop himself from slamming the door behind himself, though, and realized at that point he was genuinely angry at George.

And for what? For just scooting his face forward a bit, completely unintentionally confusing the shit out of Clay? Or, the other possibility, for straight-faced lying right after kissing him and ruining what could have been a perfect moment? Which was worse? Which was better?

There were no such things as perfect moments, of course, Clay reasoned with himself as he ripped the comforter from under Nick, who grumbled in his sleep before turning over and going back to snoring.

Clay threw the poofy blanket at George’s head without looking at him when he returned, jumping back into bed and turning off the lamp before turning his back without a word. They’d deal with this in the morning, with a sober George--and they *would*, Clay promised himself. Quietly, George arranged the comforter, and they laid silently in the dark for a minute. Then the other man quietly said, “This thing is pretty big. If you’re still. Cold, I mean.”

Clay accepted with a quiet, “Sure,” and took the corner George offered.

They were a little closer--though not nearly as close as their sock snuggle session earlier--and yet somehow, despite the internal screaming and the remaining traces of anger and the replay of that moment, over and over again in his head, Clay eventually did drift off to the sound of George’s quiet breathing.

--

George asleep was . . . a sight.

Clay woke up to his alarm--today was the first of VidCon, and creators were supposed to be there early--and rolled over to the sight. George, comforter tucked snugly under his chin, hair floofed

and lips slightly parted. In the morning light, Clay also saw things he hadn't noticed before: the curve of his eyebrow, the purple veins on his eyelids. The barest hints of stubble, above his lip and around his chin.

Clay had seen him on camera for years, had *known* George was attractive for years, but only now truly felt affected by it. Like someone had driven a punch into his middle, or he'd fallen hard on his back from a height. All tight and breathless inside.

But hearing any of this would make George recoil in horror. He rolled his eyes at Clay's jokes about them most of the time, but much worse, he got all stiff and uncomfortable when Clay actually tried to be serious. Sure, Clay wanted to express his feelings now that he sorted them out--but wouldn't that just make things worse?

George just kissed you, Clay's mind interrupted just then, the events of last night suddenly replaying in his mind.

Clay literally laughed out loud.

That couldn't have been an accident. In the moment, he'd been self-conscious enough to doubt, to half-believe George's assertions--but Clay could see now, in the light of day, there was just no way. He sat up in bed, then, looking forward to today. He was going to talk to George. They were going to actually talk out their feelings and come clean. George had kissed him, and Clay was going to make him say why.

And he made reference to a comment you made on a fanfic???

Okay, that--that felt a little outside the realm of possibility. Clay laughed more, shaking his head, trying to remember more clearly what George had said--

"Ughghgh wagh--?" George blinked bleary, red eyes up at him then, squinting and groaning.

"Good morning!" Clay said cheerily, deciding to think more on it later. "I heard ibuprofen helps with hangovers, right? We've got a whole day of VidCon ahead of us, my friend."

George groaned some more, sat up, and then promptly went green.

In a streak of blue t-shirt and black hair, he was out of the bed and running to the bathroom, the sound of the toilet lid crashing back just before the wet retching noises started. Clay winced and, after a second, decided to follow.

He found George gripping the toilet bowl, skinny shoulder blades sticking out like bird wings as he leaned over and heaved again. Clay knelt next to him, patted his upper back gently as the other man groaned and let his forehead fall against the porcelain rim.

“Wow, yeah, this does not change my mind about alcohol,” Clay laughed gently, feeling warm when the side of George’s mouth wobbly lifted. Bolder, Clay moved his hand up to George’s neck, lightly stroking up and down through the hairs at his nape before going back down his knobby spine again. “I guess you and Nick did have some fun--making fools of yourselves, I mean. I sure did, watching.”

George huffed, muttering something unintelligible. He leaned back, looking Clay over with bleary eyes and a small bruise on the bridge of his nose.

“Mostly it just got you hurt, though,” Clay continued, gesturing at the mark. But that reminded him-- “Speaking of, you said that ‘tough love did get one of us hurt,’ and uh, I had already said that? In a comment, on a fanfic? Which I guess I mentioned I was reading when we streamed--but I didn’t say its name, so. George? George--? George, are you--?”

George had grown greener and greener as Clay spoke. The word ‘okay’ didn’t get out before George promptly leaned down and heaved all the harder into the toilet bowl.

“Duuuuude, can’t hold his liquor,” Nick said behind them, appearing on the scene. George was a bit too preoccupied to notice.

“You don’t look so hot yourself,” Clay said, looking him up and down. Reddened eyes, dark circles under them, still wearing the outfit from yesterday.

Nick snorted. “I’m the *picture* of health, Clay. Just gotta take a shower, and I’ll be right back to being the handsomest of the team. I came by just to make sure you two weren’t in some adorable morning-after pose I needed to capture.” He shook his phone suggestively.

Clay narrowed his eyes, starting, “George’s bed got spilled on, we just--”

“Ah ah ah ah ah, no explanation needed my friend. You keep holding George’s hair over here, and I’ll get myself cleaned up. Between the two of us, we should be able to keep him from choking on his own vomit before the first meet-up--”

“Nick, fuck off,” George growled.

At that Nick saluted and then disappeared from the doorway, likely back to his and George’s rooms. Clay chuckled and, with an inward sigh, stopped petting George’s back when the other man sat upright, cheeks flushed.

“Got it all out?” Clay asked. When George glared at him in answer, Clay quickly got up and filled up one of the hotel’s plastic little cups with water. He hung around while George took it and swished the water in his mouth, spitting it back out multiple times before he finally tried to get up off his knees. Then Clay swooped in to help, grabbing George’s skinny elbow with one arm and his shoulder on the other to lift him up.

“I’m fine, Clay, really,” George said in complaint, though he didn’t slough off Clay’s hands. “Feel loads better now, I swear, I won’t make us late--”

“I don’t care about that,” Clay interrupted. He kept one hand on George’s shoulder, tugging him to face him. “I just want to . . . make sure we’re okay.”

That didn’t come out right.

George gave him a wary look. “I’m fine. You’re fine, it looks like.”

“Shut up, you know that’s not what I--” Clay let out a frustrated breath, remembering now just how hard *feelings* were to articulate. “Last night we sort of . . . well. You kissed me. Remember?”

George’s eyes widened. He looked like he might be sick all over again for a moment, though the nausea seemed to pass. “Oh.”

Well, that wasn’t the worst reaction he could have given, Clay tried to inwardly reason, before plowing on: “And we slept in the same bed--and. Uh, cuddled. Do you remember that too?”

George looked physically pained. “Yeah . . . I must have been, like, *really* drunk, Clay. Sorry about that--”

“I don’t want an apology,” Clay shook his head.

But George kept going.

“No really, I would never have done any of that if I wasn’t crazy drunk. I must have,” here George nervously laughed, “must have thought you were a--a *girl* , or something, so, hah, yeah--”

Clay could feel his insides going cold. This was going terribly wrong--probably the worst it could have gone. No straightforward explanation of why he hadn’t meant it or shy admittance of feelings. Just an unhelpful, vague in between. Toeing the line again. Like they always were.

Whatever words were in his mouth, if he opened it now they would probably come out angry. It was time to retreat, to restore his health bar, so to speak, before making any sort of attack--or, in this case, declaration of love. “It’s fine, George,” he found himself saying instead. “Don’t worry about it. I didn’t think it meant anything.”

He walked away quickly, not wanting to see the relief that was likely all over George’s face.

At least, a couple hours later, he was with his fans.

Needless to say, the crowds and crowds of people weren’t exactly Clay’s thing, but when they came by one by one, albeit from a line that seemed to run out of the building, he could focus on each person. Most grinning like mad, talking over-excitedly and asking him questions of varying appropriateness as he signed their merch. Some, quieter and shy, seeming to trip over themselves in their hesitance to take his time.

Even rarer, but his favorite, the ones who looked nauseous--maybe because he thought of George from this morning, Clay laughed to himself later. Regardless, he always found it most rewarding to put a smile on their face by the end of the short, 20 second exchange he had with them.

And then there were panels, and Q&A sessions, and big convention-wide meetings, and finally

another meet-and-greet session for ‘Dream,’ this time only for those who paid to take a picture with him--and George.

Whenever he’d seen glimpses of the other man that day, George seemed happy and smiling and carefree. The interactions they’d had on the Dream Team panel had been short but in character, teasing and joking with each other and Nick. Nothing appeared to be wrong. Maybe because last night *was* a drunken mistake. Maybe simply because George was enjoying himself. But when Clay was directed to the photo booth session just before dinner, Nick scheduled for one last panel with the likes of Quackity and Karl, he was with George alone for the first time that day since the early morning’s stilted conversation.

George was already there, biting at his lip as he typed out something extensive onto his phone. Clay watched him for a few seconds before clearing his throat, smirking a little bit when George jumped and nearly dropped it.

“Get some fan’s number?” Clay teased, and started wheezing at George’s horrified face in response.

George, of course, recovered quick. “*I’m* not the one who fancies e-girls, Clay,” he shot back, smirking now too.

Clay should probably feel defensive. Mostly he’s just wondering if it’s a simple jest or George actually does pay attention to the girls Clay has dated. “Could have fooled me, with all your twitter flirtations,” he laughs. “When’s the last time you flirted with someone, face-to-face?”

It didn’t land like a joke, for some reason. George stared at him, hard enough Clay wondered if there was something on his face, and then started to open his mouth to say something just as the photographer came in. She started talking animatedly to them about basic protocols and rules, gave a few pro-tips, and the first fan was led in to pose with.

It was a long hour and a half, to be honest. By the end the soles of his feet were hurting and Clay was ready for the more relaxing, “Creators Only” VIP dinner awaiting them. The last group, three very nervous but smiling sisters, asked if Clay and George could form a heart with their arms from which the three girls would pose in--completely doable, but still requiring Clay to twist his hips a bit unnaturally, and touch hands with George.

George didn’t look at him once, not even as they quickly set it up. He stared straight ahead, already smiling, only glancing away from the camera to remark to the girls, “You guys are awesome for waiting this long” in a sincere voice, and wave off their answering titters thanking Clay and George

for still getting to them. Clay gave them each hugs--probably his thousandth hug today, if he was counting--and also tried to give them a few last words, like, "Hope you guys enjoy the rest of VidCon" or something.

But when he turned back, ready to sigh with George and groan together about the state of their feet and maybe even actually talk, the other man was gone.

His phone, however, was on the ground.

It probably fell out of his pant pocket when they had to kneel into that weird position. Clay picked up the simple blue-cased iphone, turning it over and smiling at the picture of George's cat on the lock screen. He'd have to give it back to George when he caught up with him at dinner.

But then, mindlessly, Clay swiped at the screen and realized the screen wasn't actually *locked* .

Oh . . . oh fuck.

Clay stared, long enough his eyes were going dry and blurry.

It was the Dreamnotfound dragon fanfic, he realized pretty quickly.

But it was the next unposted, unfinished *chapter* of it.

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

I return from the grave one last time with a warning: fanfic writers can never be trusted!!!

But I'm happy, in this case, I could actually deliver on the finale of this little story. I hope it will be worth the wait!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

He scrolled up and down the page, rereading, trying to come up with another explanation.

Maybe George had . . . really liked the fanfic too, and tried to come up with his own ending. Maybe he had revealed who he was, just to get special access from the author before the actual story was updated. Maybe, just maybe, this was a different platform (even though it *definitely looked like* plain old Google Docs) that the author posted first on.

It wasn't any of those things.

Clay found himself greedily consuming every new word, even as his mind kept chanting, *there's no way this is George, there's no way this is George* --but as fanfic Dream and George finally watched their dragon Georgina spread her wings and fly off, perhaps never to return, the story ended:

Dream glanced at George, then sighing, said, "It was fun to be a parent with you. You're actually not as bad at it as I thought."

"Is that finally a compliment, Dream?" George laughed, slugging Dream's green arm good-naturedly.

Dream grinned and punched him back. "Dream on."

With that, the two headed back down the mountain, happy to be friends.

Clay turned off the phone, gripping hard enough to hurt his hand as he power-walked through the

convention center to the main room set up for the VIP dinner. He saw George sitting next to Nick and Karl, some of the British crew not far either, but Clay was past caring. He stalked up right behind George and with one hand wrenched back the seat the other man was sitting at.

George stumbled to his feet, eyes going wide then narrowing as he looked up at Clay and stuttered, "What--Clay, what the f--"

Clay aggressively pushed the phone into that skinny chest, watching in satisfaction as Georges face crumbled with confusion then alarm.

But not satisfied enough. "Fix it," he demanded, pointing at the phone George now held to his chest.

George blinked wide eyes at him. "What are you--"

" *Fix* the ending," Clay clarified, and he could feel eyes on him now, his voice loud enough even despite the roar of voices in the room. He couldn't care less, right now. "You know that's not a satisfying end. Dream and George have been bursting with unresolved tension all throughout this story-- *you* wrote it that way. You can't finish things like that. Resolving *nothing* ."

George's face went on an entire journey through Clay's speech, but it seemed now to have settled on pink with embarrassment. "Clay, can we talk later?" he said in an urgent whisper.

But Clay was so done with this, all the waiting and delaying and confusing cryptic explanations that avoided their problems. He'd been party to it himself up until now, but no longer. "We're talking right now," he said in response.

At that, Nick chimed in, "Uhhh maybe you guys could like, go somewhere private? Not that the rest of us aren't enjoying--"

"UngHhghh," George groaned--but then his hand curled around Clay's elbow, tugging him towards the nearest exit.

Clay left himself be led.

The moment George pulled them into a small, dark presentation room he let go of Clay, putting a good five feet of distance between them. "I'm sorry for writing a fanfic about us," George said without fanfare. He crossed thin arms across his chest, nearly hugging himself as he shrugged and told the floor, "It started out as a joke, I was going to tell you. But then a ton of people started reading it, and . . ."

"And you got invested just like them," Clay guessed.

George didn't argue, eyes still on the floor.

"George, look at me," Clay said after a moment, watching as the shorter man slowly lifted his gaze. When his eyes, too dark to see the blue in this shadowed room, met Clay's, he made sure to give his friend a reassuring smile. "I got invested too," he admitted.

George cracked a smile. "You were smooch anon." He looked down at his phone, then, expression rueful. "I just wanted to end it, even if it wasn't the right way. Get it over with, so I could move on."

Clay swallowed hard. "Do you want to move on?" he questioned carefully, innuendo intended. They had kissed last night, after all. They had even snuggled together, before stupidity got the best of both of them.

Even in the dark, Clay could see George's face pale. "I don't know what other ending to write," he said slowly, though he was staring at the taller man with, dare Clay think it, hope.

He shrugged with a smirk. "Give your fans what they want," he said, full of nonchalance as he closed the distance between them.

George's eyes narrowed slightly as he answered, "Then . . . tell me. What do you want?"

Clay reached out a hand, gently tilting George's chin up towards him as he closed the last of the distance--close enough to hear George gulp hard, to hear him drawing in a surprised breath.

Clay searched his best friend's eyes, looking for a lack of desire beneath the obvious nerves and trepidation. "How about I show you?" he whispered against George's lips finally. And then Clay was leaning in, letting out a silent sigh of relief as George moved to meet him the rest of the way.

They were both so careful--so worried about what the other was thinking, Clay could tell, just from how slowly their lips moved in the first moment. And that didn't usually mean a great kiss, in his experience. Still better than last night's mess up--but no, they could do better.

Trying to knock George out of focus, Clay pulled the smaller man in by the slight curve of his lower back, pleased at the stutter in George's movements before he seemed to lean further into the kiss, tilting his head more and melting into Clay's chest. Clay's hand under his chin slid back to cup his scratchy cheek--reminding Clay this was a guy, a *male* he was kissing--and then George gently started using his tongue, and Clay was knocked out of his mind as well.

Just like that, everything fit into place. Two puzzle pieces, finally finding where to connect. George wrapped arms around Clay's neck, hugging him closer, and at this point Clay was probably about to sprout an erection, with George so pressed against him.

They'd have to stop, he told himself, even as he really started introducing his tongue to the tango party as well, and the whole world got hazy outside of just *George*, the scent and sound and feel of the man all around him.

He was being guided somewhere, Clay thought at first, wondering hazily if it was towards the wall or maybe one of the desks--but then George's kisses grew gentle and closed-mouthed, hands still pushing against Clay's chest--to stop him, not take him against a surface, Clay realized with a twinge of disappointment.

Clay released his hold on the other man, saying breathlessly, "Please don't tell me you don't think this is a good idea."

When George just giggled, Clay let out a breathy laugh of relief. He opened his eyes and smiled to see George's face--cheeks splotched with color, lips well-kissed and eyes bright. No worry or consternation in them any longer.

"Okay, good," Clay said, pointing between them, "because we're really good at this, I think."

George snorted. "Not anything else," he pointed out. "How long would this have taken if you hadn't gotten me drunk enough to do something stupid?"

"*I got you drunk?*" Clay laughed, but he let the matter slide. "Maybe we have slight

communication issues--" he ignored George's disbelieving tone as he repeated '*slight ?*' and continued, "--but now we can just stop being idiots and kiss. That'll probably resolve most things."

George glared. "Clay, you don't just--" and then he cut himself off as Clay laughed, George pushing at his chest in mock annoyance as he realized Clay was trying to get a rise out of him.

Clay leaned down and kissed him one more time--just because now he could.

He stopped when he heard George's growling stomach. It *had* been a long day.

"Time to head back," he agreed with it, though made no move except to wrap arms around George's bony shoulders as his best friend--boyfriend?? Clay's mind wondered--did the same.

"And then what?" George said, voice unguardedly insecure for once.

Clay squeezed him just a bit tighter. "Then you write a new ending, of course," he said. "Something with a lot of gushy talk about feelings, plans to stay together, and at *least* some hand holding, come on."

"I could probably write that . . . with a little more inspiration from smooch anon, maybe," George laughed as he broke away, and his hand darted out as if on impulse to grab Clay's own.

He ensnared it between his fingers before George could second guess himself, squeezing gently. "Sure you want to do this so soon, in front of everyone?" Clay made sure, swinging their hands lightly for emphasis.

George shrugged with feigned nonchalance. "Hey, we've already shared a bed and kissed," he said. "This is just . . . *covering all our bases* ."

Clay groaned at the enormously awful pun--but he couldn't help it. He was smiling.

When they headed back to the dinner, Nick saw them first, grinning as he called out " *Hey mamas*," and then yelled at those around them, "I told you guys," and about a quarter of the room saw and started screaming--Tommy's banshee shrieks being the loudest--and George's hand just squeezed

Clay's tightly as they simply smiled at everyone and sat down in their reserved seats.

The rest of VidCon would end up being a crazy haze--but Clay wouldn't change anything, not for the world.

Especially not writing his stupid, silly little comment on a Dreamnotfound fanfic.

Chapter End Notes

This last chapter is dedicated to:

- 1) My sister Silvercloud, who kept me hyped on DNF
- 2) Anna, random chick on bumble I met who turns out has read this unfinished fic 10 times?? and gave some helpful fic recs.
- 3) My girlfriend, formerly best friend, who I'd been pining after (little did I know she was too), and after we finally confessed our feelings this week I found the inspiration to let George and Clay do the same!

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